

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8718

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 2577

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PFOR, NP

SUBJECT: RASTRYA PANCHAYAT SESSION OPENS: KING BIRENDRA'S

ADDRESS FROM THE THRONE

SUMMARY: ADDRESSING NATIONAL PANCHAYAT JUNE 24 IN TRADITIONAL SPEECH FROM THE THRONE, NEPAL'S KING BIRENDRA DEALT ALMOST ENTIRELY WITH DOMESTIC ISSUES AND PLANS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE MADE ONLY PASSING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INFLATION AND LAW AND ORDER PROBLEMS WHICH ARE REPORTEDLY UPPERMOST IN THE MINDS OF LEGISLATORS. WE ANTICIPATE THAT ON THESE ISSUES GOVERNMENT WILL COME IN FOR CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM IN COURSE OF CURRENT SESSION. END SUMMARY.

1. KING BIRENDRA JUNE 24 DELIVERED TRADITIONAL ADDRESS FROM THRONE TO NATIONAL PANCHAYAT WHICH HAD CONVENED FOR THREE-MONTH LONG BUDGET SESSION JUNE 21 (TEXT BEING POUCHED). HIS EMPHASIS WAS ALMOST ENTIRELY ON PLANS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE GAVE NO INDICATION OF ANY PLANS TO LIBERALIZE PARTYLESS PANCHAYAT SYSTEM, WHICH HE SAID IS "MOVING AHEAD WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF PROMOTING PUBLIC WELFARE," AND ASSERTED THAT AS
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RESULT "OF GENERAL CONSCIOUSNESS GENERATED BY THIS SYSTEM, WE

CAN SEE POSITIVE CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN THE ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE COMMON MAN."

2. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT COUNTRY IS "RIDDEN WITH SCARCITIES" AND THAT "INFLATION AND SHORTAGES OF ESSENTIAL GOODS HAVE NOW BECOME THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY," HE PUT THIS IN CONTEXT OF "ECONOMIC CRISIS THAT HAS ENGULFED THE ENTIRE WORLD" AND SAID THAT GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE HIGH PRIORITY TO DEVELOPMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. IN REFERENCE TO FOREIGN AID, KING SAID "SPECIAL ATTENTION WILL ALSO BE GIVEN TO NEED OF UTILIZING, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, INDIGENOUS RESOURCES AND KNOW-HOW IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREIGN-AIDED PROJECTS." RESETTLEMENT, WILDLIFE PRESERVATION, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, TRADE DIVERSIFICATION, INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, HEALTH SERVICES, LEGAL SYSTEM, AND ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN WERE ALSO MENTIONED. KING ALSO SAID "EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO INCREASE THE CAPABILITIES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF RNAC."

3. IN BRIEF REFERENCE TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BIRENDRA MENTIONED HIS PARTICIPATION IN ALGIERS NAC, TRADE AND PAYMENTS AGREEMENT WITH PRC, AND TALKS DURING STATE VISITS WITH GOI AND PRC LEADERS AND WITH MARSHAL TITO DURING LATTER'S VISIT HERE.

4. DURING PERORATION, BIRENDRA SAID "LAST YEAR A FEW UNDESIRABLE AND SENSELESS INCIDENTS OCCURRED...SUCH MINOR INCIDENTS CANNOT HAVE ANY EFFECT ON US SO LONG AS WE ARE DEDICATED AS ONE IN THE CAUSE OF NATIONAL SOLIDARITY...." THIS WAS HIS ONLY REFERENCE TO LAW AND ORDER PROBLEMS WHICH, ACCORDING TO PANCHAYAT MEMBERS TO WHOM WE HAVE TALKED, HAS BEEN MAIN ITEM OF CONCERN IN IN PANCHAYAT SESSIONS THUS FAR.

5. COMMENT: A NUMBER OF PANCHAS WHOM WE HAVE INFORMALLY POLLED SEE LITTLE CHANCE FOR POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION DURING THIS PANCHAYAT SESSION, THOUGH VERNACULAR PRESS IS SPECULATING THAT SESSIONS WILL SOON BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. ADDRESS WAS WELL STRUCTURED REVIEW OF HMG'S DEVELOPMENT EFFORT WHICH DID NOT AVOID ARTICULATION OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACING COUNTRY. IT WAS LACKING IN SPECIFICS IN ALL AREAS INCLUDING THOSE OF POTENTIAL CONCERN TO USG, I.E., USE OF INDIGENOUS RESOURCES IN AID PROJECTS AND EXPANSION OF RNAC. ITS GREATEST WEAKNESS WAS LACK OF CONFIDENTIAL

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REALISTIC REFERENCE TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS. WE ANTICIPATE THAT SESSION WILL BE A STORMY ONE AND THAT MEMBERS WILL BE VERY CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT FAILURE TO CHECK INFLATIONS AND MAINTAIN INTERNAL SECURITY.
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